CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A computer implemented method of collecting data associated with a consumer through generation of a consumer feedback communication via a wide area network, comprising:

in response to input from a consumer via the wide area network, identifying a business to which the consumer feedback communication is directed;

obtaining feedback data relating to the business from the consumer via the wide area network;

automatically generating at least a portion of the consumer feedback communication using the feedback data; and

collecting data associated with the consumer from the obtained feedback data.

2.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

addressing the consumer feedback communication to an individual associated with the business; and

transmitting the consumer feedback communication to the individual.

3.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the collected data includes data quantifying past experiences of the consumer

4.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the collected data includes data quantifying future intentions of the consumer.

5.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the collected data includes data quantifying past purchases by the consumer of products and/or services rendered by the business.

6.   The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the collected data includes data indicating economic value of the consumer over time for the business.

7.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

selecting an industry for which data associated with the consumer is to be collected;

wherein collecting data comprises obtaining consumer data relating to the selected industry from the obtained feedback data.

8.   The method as recited in claim 7, further comprising:

providing the collected data to one or more businesses within the selected industry.

9.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

associating the collected data with the consumer feedback communication.

10.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

providing the collected data to the business.

11.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

obtaining socio-economic data associated with the consumer, wherein the socio-economic data includes at least one of income of the consumer and occupation of the consumer; and

determining an economic value of the consumer to the business from the socio-economic data.

12.   The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

obtaining socio-economic data associated with the consumer, wherein the socio-economic data includes at least one of income of the consumer and occupation of the consumer; and

combining the collected data and the socio-economic data to obtain one or more indices associated with the consumer.

13.   The method as recited in claim 12, wherein the one or more indices includes a loyalty index indicating a level of loyalty of the consumer to the business.

14.   The method as recited in claim 12, wherein the one or more indices includes a buyer power index indicating a level of purchase power of the consumer.

15. A system for collecting data associated with a consumer through generation of a consumer feedback communication via a wide area network, comprising:

a processor; and

a memory, at least one of the processor and the memory being adapted for:

in response to input from a consumer via the wide area network, identifying a business to which the consumer feedback communication is directed;

obtaining feedback data relating to the business from the consumer via the wide area network;

automatically generating at least a portion of the consumer feedback communication using the feedback data; and

collecting data associated with the consumer from the obtained feedback data.

16. A computer implemented method of collecting data associated with a consumer, comprising:

(a) selecting a business to which a consumer feedback communication is to be directed;

(b) obtaining one or more ratings relating to the business from the consumer;

(c) composing a consumer feedback communication using the obtained ratings; and

(d) creating one or more indices from the obtained ratings, the one or more indices categorizing the consumer according to the obtained ratings.

17. The method as recited in claim 16, further comprising:

repeating steps (a), (b), and (c) for one or more consumer feedback communications directed to one or more businesses within an industry.

18. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein (d) creating one or more indices is performed for the one or more consumer feedback communications such that a single set of indices is associated with the consumer.

19. The method as recited in claim 16, further comprising:

(e) transmitting the consumer feedback communication to the business.

20. The method as recited in claim 19, further comprising:

repeating steps (a), (b), (c), and (e) for one or more consumer feedback communications directed to one or more businesses within an industry.

21. The method as recited in claim 16, wherein the obtained ratings include a satisfaction rating, a future purchase intent, and future word of mouth influence intent, wherein creating one or more indices from the obtained ratings comprises:

combining the satisfaction rating, the future purchase intent, and the future word of mouth influence intent to create a loyalty index indicating a level of loyalty of the consumer to the business.

22. The method as recited in claim 21, further comprising:

transmitting the consumer feedback communication to the business; and

receiving a consumer response to a business feedback response sent by the business in response to the consumer feedback communication, the consumer response including a second set of obtained ratings associated with the business, the second set of obtained ratings including a second satisfaction rating, a second future purchase intent, and a second future word of mouth influence intent; and

combining the second satisfaction rating, the second future purchase intent, and the second future word of mouth influence intent to create a second loyalty index indicating a level of loyalty of the consumer to the business.

23. The method as recited in claim 16, wherein the one or more obtained ratings include an indication of volume of purchase of goods or services by the consumer within a product category associated with the business;

obtaining socio-economic data associated with the consumer, wherein the socio-economic data includes at least one of income of the consumer and occupation of the consumer; and

combining the obtained ratings and the socio-economic data to obtain a buyer power index associated with the consumer.

24. The method as recited in claim 23, wherein the one or more obtained ratings further comprise an indication of the business' share of the volume of purchase by the consumer of goods or services within the product category.

25.   The method as recited in claim 16, wherein the one or more obtained ratings include an indication of frequency of purchase by the consumer of goods or services within a product category associated with the business;

obtaining socio-economic data associated with the consumer, wherein the socio-economic data includes at least one of income of the consumer and occupation of the consumer; and

combining the obtained ratings and the socio-economic data to obtain a buyer power index associated with the consumer.

26.   The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the one or more obtained ratings further include an indication of frequency of purchase by the consumer of goods or services provided by the business.

27.   A system for collecting data associated with a consumer, comprising:

a processor; and

a memory, at least one of the processor and the memory being adapted for:

(a) selecting a business to which a consumer feedback communication is to be directed;

(b) obtaining one or more ratings relating to the business from the consumer;

(c) composing a consumer feedback communication using the obtained ratings; and

(d) creating one or more indices from the obtained ratings, the one or more indices categorizing the consumer according to the obtained ratings.

28.   A system for generation of a consumer feedback communication from a consumer directed to a business and collection of data associated with the consumer, comprising:

a consumer feedback communication generator configured to obtain feedback data associated with the business from the consumer, compose a consumer feedback communication including at least a portion of the obtained feedback data, and transmit the consumer feedback communication to an individual associated with the business; and

a data collection mechanism coupled to the consumer feedback communication generator, the data collection mechanism configured to interpret the feedback data and associate the interpreted feedback data with consumer information identifying the consumer.

29. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

addressing the consumer feedback communication to an individual associated with the business;

addressing the consumer feedback communication to one or more additional individuals; and

determining word of mouth impact of the consumer from information associated with addressing the consumer feedback communication to one or more additional individuals.

30. The method as recited in claim 29, wherein addressing the consumer feedback communication to one or more additional individuals comprises:

addressing a carbon copy of the consumer feedback communication to the one or more additional individuals.

31. The method as recited in claim 29, further comprising:

transmitting the consumer feedback communication to the individual associated with the business and the one or more additional individuals.

32. The method as recited in claim 29, wherein determining word of mouth impact of the consumer comprises ascertaining a number of individuals carbon copied on the consumer feedback communication.

33. The method as recited in claim 29, further comprising:

repeating the steps of identifying, obtaining, generating, collecting, addressing the consumer feedback communication to an individual associated with the business, and addressing the consumer feedback communication to one or more additional individuals for one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer;

wherein determining word of mouth impact comprises ascertaining a total number of individuals carbon copied for the one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer.

34. The method as recited in claim 33, further comprising:

determining a number of consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer; and

ascertaining an average number of individuals carbon copied by the consumer on a consumer feedback communication from the number of consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer and the total number of individuals carbon copied for the one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer.

35.   The method as recited in claim 29, further comprising:

addressing the consumer feedback communication to a second set of one or more additional individuals;

wherein collecting data associated with the consumer further comprises obtaining information related to addressing the consumer feedback communication to the second set of one or more additional individuals.

36.   The method as recited in claim 35, wherein determining word of mouth impact of the consumer comprises:

ascertaining a number of individuals carbon copied on the consumer feedback communication;

ascertaining a number of individuals in the second set of one or more additional individuals.

37.   The method as recited in claim 36, wherein the second set of one or more additional individuals are direct addressees of the consumer feedback communication.

38.   The method as recited in claim 35, further comprising:

repeating the steps of identifying, obtaining, generating, collecting, addressing the consumer feedback communication to an individual associated with the business, and addressing the consumer feedback communication to one or more additional individuals for one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer; and

ascertaining a total number of individuals carbon copied for the one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer;

ascertaining a total number of individuals in the second set of one or more additional individuals for the one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer; and

adding the total number of individuals carbon copied and the total number of individuals in the second set over the one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer to obtain a total number of individuals who received the one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer.

39. The method as recited in claim 38, further comprising:

determining a number of the consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer; and

ascertaining an average number of individuals who received a consumer feedback communication sent by the consumer from the number of consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer and the total number of individuals who received the one or more consumer feedback communications sent by the consumer.

40. The method as recited in claim 29, further comprising:

obtaining socio-economic data associated with the consumer;

wherein determining the word of mouth impact of the consumer further comprises using the socio-economic data to infer a socio-economic nature of the one or more additional individuals to whom the consumer feedback communication has been addressed.

41. The method as recited in claim 40, wherein the socio-economic data includes information indicating at least one of salary, job title and education level of the consumer.

42. The method as recited in claim 40, wherein the socio-economic data includes at least one of a title, a political status, and an associated special interest group.

43. A computer implemented method of collecting data associated with a consumer through generation of a consumer feedback communication via a wide area network, comprising:

(a) in response to input from a consumer via the wide area network, identifying a business to which the consumer feedback communication is directed;

(b) obtaining feedback data relating to the business from the consumer via the wide area network;

(c) automatically generating at least a portion of the consumer feedback communication using the feedback data;

(d) addressing the consumer feedback communication to an individual associated with the business;

(e) addressing the consumer feedback communication to one or more additional individuals;

(f) repeating steps (a) – (e) for one or more consumer feedback communications that have been generated; and

(g) creating an index from information associated with the one or more individuals to whom the consumer feedback communications were addressed.

44.   The method as recited in claim 43, wherein (g) creating an index further comprises ascertaining a number of the consumer feedback communications that have been generated.

45.   The method as recited in claim 43, wherein creating the index further comprises accessing at least a portion of the obtained feedback data.

46.   The method as recited in claim 43, wherein the information indicates a title or status of the one or more individuals.

47.   The method as recited in claim 43, further comprising:

ascertaining from the index whether the consumer poses has a potential to negatively influence other consumers.

48.   The method as recited in claim 43, further comprising:

determining whether the index is within a predetermined set of index values; and

identifying the consumer as an expert user when the index is within the predetermined set of index values.

49.   The method as recited in claim 43, further comprising:

determining whether the index is within a predetermined set of index values; and

when the index is within the predetermined set of index values, identifying the consumer as a user to receive free product or services to generate positive word of mouth.

50.   The method as recited in claim 43, further comprising:

determining whether the index is within a predetermined set of index values; and

when the index is determined to be within the predetermined set of index values, identifying the consumer as an individual that can be expected to generate positive word of mouth.

51.   A system for sending a consumer feedback communication from a consumer to a business and collecting data associated with the consumer, comprising:

a consumer feedback communication generator configured to obtain feedback data associated with the business from the consumer, compose a consumer feedback communication using the obtained feedback data and having associated address information identifying one or more individuals to receive the consumer feedback communication, and send the consumer feedback communication; and

a data collection mechanism coupled to the consumer feedback communication generator, the data collection mechanism configured to determine influence potential of the consumer from the address information and associate the determined influence potential of the consumer with consumer information identifying the consumer.

52.   The system as recited in claim 51, wherein the address information comprises an indication of at least one of title and status of the one or more individuals.

53.   The system as recited in claim 51, wherein the data collection mechanism is further configured to determine influence potential of the consumer from the obtained feedback data.

54.   A computer readable medium storing thereon computer readable instructions for collecting data associated with a consumer through generation of a consumer feedback communication via a wide area network, comprising:

instructions for identifying a business to which the consumer feedback communication is directed in response to input from a consumer via the wide area network;

instructions for obtaining feedback data relating to the business from the consumer

via the wide area network;

instructions for automatically generating at least a portion of the consumer feedback communication using the feedback data; and

instructions for collecting data associated with the consumer from the obtained feedback data.

55. A computer readable medium storing thereon computer readable instructions for collecting data associated with a consumer, comprising:

(a) instructions for selecting a business to which a consumer feedback communication is to be directed;

(b) instructions for obtaining one or more ratings relating to the business from the consumer;

(c) instructions for composing a consumer feedback communication using the obtained ratings; and

(d) instructions for creating one or more indices from the obtained ratings, the one or more indices categorizing the consumer according to the obtained ratings.

56. A computer readable medium storing thereon computer readable instructions for collecting data associated with a consumer through generation of a consumer feedback communication via a wide area network, comprising:

(a) instructions for identifying a business to which the consumer feedback communication is directed in response to input from a consumer via the wide area network;

(b) instructions for obtaining feedback data relating to the business from the consumer via the wide area network;

(c) instructions for automatically generating at least a portion of the consumer feedback communication using the feedback data;

(d) instructions for addressing the consumer feedback communication to an individual associated with the business;

(e) instructions for addressing the consumer feedback communication to one or more additional individuals;

(f) instructions for repeating steps (a) – (e) for one or more consumer feedback communications that have been generated; and

(g) instructions for creating an index from information associated with the one or

more individuals to whom the consumer feedback communications were addressed.

57.   A computer implemented method of collecting data associated with a user through generation of a feedback communication via a wide area network, comprising:

in response to input from a user via the wide area network, identifying an entity to which the feedback communication is directed;

obtaining feedback data relating to the entity from the user via the wide area network;

automatically generating at least a portion of the feedback communication using the feedback data; and

collecting data associated with the user from the obtained feedback data.

58.   The computer implemented method as recited in claim 57, further comprising:

addressing the feedback communication to an individual associated with the entity;

addressing the feedback communication to one or more additional individuals; and

determining word of mouth impact of the user from information associated with addressing the feedback communication to one or more additional individuals.